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A SKETCH
OF
THE CHARACTERS
OF
SIR JOHN PATTESON
AND
SIR JOHN COLERIDGE.

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF "NOBODY'S FRIENDS."

S. H. W.

FEBRUARY 6TH, 1877.

IN the lives and characters of our last two Presidents, there is for the most part so close a resemblance, and except at the time of their earliest education, they moved so much in the same sphere, that they might almost be likened to twin stars in the same constellation.

They were born in the same year at the latter end of the last century, and after receiving their first education in the place of their birth, the one at Coney Weston, under his father's curate and friend, the Rev. M. Merest, the other at Ottery St. Mary's, under his uncle, the Rev. George Coleridge, they went to Eton at the commencement of this century; where they contracted a lasting friendship for each other, which ripened afterwards into a nearer and dearer relationship. During their Eton youth there was manifested in each of them that self-reliance, manly spirit and thoughtful intelligence, which marked their career to the end of their lives: and so

"as morning shows the day,
Their childhood showed the future man."

At Eton Patteson obtained among his schoolfellows the sobriquet of Old Patteson; and while he was known to the masters as a good boy in school, he was known also to his

playmates out of school as a good sculler, a good swimmer, a good cricketer, and a good player at fives and at football. Coleridge, like Patteson, was a favourite of the head-master, and if he inherited a good deal of the family talent, it is no disparagement to them to say that he was indebted to Dr. Goodall for a large portion of his classical taste and elegant scholarship. Coleridge was less robust than Patteson, and he may not have excelled in so many of the rougher sports, but in manliness of spirit he was not inferior. And if his disposition would have naturally led him to "beware of entrance into a quarrel," yet being in it, he was safe to bear it that the opposers should beware of him. Accordingly an anecdote was long preserved at Eton of a memorable battle fought by him and a boy of the name of Mann, which lasted a whole after 12 and the greater part of an after 4, and when the master came and took the combatants away, the two young heroes were neither of them able to see each other.

On leaving Eton both Patteson and Coleridge were sent to the University; and here for the first and last time their paths were parted. Patteson got King's, and went to Cambridge, where he obtained a Davies' University Scholarship. But Coleridge lost King's, for as these were times when a King's Scholarship depended on seniority and on that alone, Coleridge, with Milman and Bishop Sumner, were all superannuated. He obtained, however, a Corpus Scholarship and a Fellowship in Exeter College, in the University of Oxford, and the bracing effect of a mortifying disappointment, probably did him more good than harm. The University career both of Patteson and Coleridge continued to give the same good earnest of future success. When they quitted the Universities the two young friends met once more on the same road, the road that leads to the Bar and the Bench.

They were fellow pupils in the same chambers,—the chambers of an eminent Special Pleader, Mr. Godfrey Sikes. At the bar they were trusted and thoughtful counsel, but without these shining and dashing qualities which sometimes bring more grist to the mill than sound learning and solid judgment. There was so far a difference between them that of Patteson it might be said that he had more of the oak than the willow; of Coleridge it was said that he had more of the willow than the

oak. Simplicity, perspicuity, and profound knowledge were the invariable characteristics of Patteson's arguments. A calm address, careful study, and persuasive reasoning showed that Coleridge had a greater aptitude for skilful defence than for aggressive warfare.

Two such men are almost sure to reach the Bench; but before they won that dignified position, a quieter honour was conferred upon them, for Patteson became one of Nobody's Friends in 1816, and Coleridge in 1820.

The promotion of each of them to the Judicial Bench has an interesting anecdote connected with it. A new and difficult point of law had arisen with reference to a Prebendary's right of presentation, and it was argued by Patteson on an appeal in Error from the Court of Common Pleas. The Bench were unmistakeably against him; but his reasoning was so clear, so terse, so cogent, that judgment was given in his favour. The calm-thinking Tenterden was struck with admiration, and the kind-hearted Bayley was so pleased that he sent down this pithy note to the successful advocate:

"Dear P——. Per Tenterden, Ch. Justice. An admirable argument. He is fit to be an early judge."

An early judge he soon became, for Lord Lyndhurst appointed him to that high office when he was only forty years of age.

Coleridge's promotion is not less pleasing. In the course of time another vacancy occurred in the Queen's Bench. Lord Lyndhurst had succeeded so well with Patteson, that he asked him to recommend "a very good man for the vacant judgeship." "You need not go further than my brother-in-law," was Patteson's reply. Lord Lyndhurst took the hint, and so the two friends who had sat together in the same form as boys at Eton, had then the pleasure of sitting together as judges on the same Bench in Westminster Hall.

Their judicial career did not end here. For when a physical infirmity in the one case, and increasing years in the other, constrained them to retire from their more active and laborious duties, they each of them became Privy Councillors and honoured members of the Judicial Committee.

All the fine qualities which they had shown at the Bar were of essential service to them when seated on the Bench.

In addition to these they also brought to bear on the steady discharge of their daily duties, the still finer qualities of moral worth, strict impartiality, and unswerving rectitude, which gave even greater weight and authority to the faithful exercise of judicial power.

It was while they were judges that each of them became in turns your President—Patteson from the year 1839 until the year 1861, and Coleridge from the year 1861 until the year 1870. Some of us can recollect the affable dignity with which they presided over our social gatherings. As social companions they were always friendly and kindly disposed, always intelligent and well-informed, always genial, instructive and cheerful; but they bore their quarterings, as the heralds would say, with a difference, for the cheerfulness of Patteson was freer and more joyous, while the cheerfulness of Coleridge had usually something of a pensive tinge, which seemed to be a part of his graver nature.

But here I must pause. It is not for us to probe the working of their innermost thoughts, except so far as they were manifested outwardly. This only will I undertake to say, that neither of them would ever have been what they were—neither of them would have attained the distinguished position and the honourable reputation which they so justly earned—neither of them would have been held in such respect, so truly valued, so deservedly esteemed, if they had not been animated all through their lives by the highest motives of Christian principle, and the purest feeling of a Christian's duty.

The memories of two such men ought not to pass away; and if more were needed to keep them in our recollection, it will not be forgotten that one of them was the friend and biographer of the saintly author of the "Christian Year," and the other was the father of that devoted martyr to his Saviour's cause, the Bishop of Melanesia, who bore the name both of Coleridge and Patteson, which his death has crowned with a lasting glory.

S. H. W.



